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From the Author –

HEROICAL EPISTLE

FROM

DEATH

TO

BENJAMIN MOSELEY, M.D.

ON

VACCINATION;

WITH

A POSTSCRIPT

ON SOME COLLATERAL SUBJECTS.

——Both seem'd highly pleas'd, and Death
Grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile.

PAR. LOST. Book ii.

London:

PRINTED FOR J. J. STOCKDALE,
NO. 41, PALL-MALL.

1810.

Price Two Shillings & Six-pence.

91906

Brettell & Co. Printers,
Marshall-Street, Golden-Square, London.

HEROICAL EPISTLE,

&c.

FEEL not alarm'd, my MOSELEY! let no fear
Dim thy blithe visage, and thine eye, no tear;
Nay, start not, tremble not! though I, whom men
Call King of Terrors, guide, enrag'd, the pen.
Not tow'rds thy skill my indignation turns,
Not, at thy councils, fierce, my anger, burns;
No—great thy kindness, and, to thee, my heart
Would, in return, its secret thoughts impart.

Then hail the token of thy grateful friend,
Hail the best tribute absent love can send;
Love, strong as Death, 'twas said of old, could prove:
Oh! let me show that Death is fond as love.

The ardent thought, depicturing former joy,
When young Ænone bless'd the Trojan boy;
The wish Penelope all-anxious gave
To him, who struggled through the distant wave;
The tender grief breath'd sweetly by that bard,
Who drew the pensive Nun and Abelard;
All these, though varied through each glowing phrase,
Scarce speak my fondness, or describe thy praise.
Dear, though I own, midst med'cine's various tribe,
Some who descend from chariots to prescribe;

Dear some, whose humbler, yet productive skill
Mingles the draught, or moulds the orbed pill;
Midst quacks, and regulars, and great and small,
Dear though are many, dearest thou of all!
My heart, which pray'rs to soften, vainly strive,
Still to thy worth is feelingly alive;
My hand, whose usual touch, as ice, is cold,
With warm endearing grasp would thine enfold;
But, lest such proof of kindness should alarm,
Still let us mutual feel the distant charm.
Were all like thee, no grief this breast had known,
Still had I heard, but never breath'd the groan;
To guide mine arrows still this eye were clear,
And, oft observing, ne'er had shed a tear.

But let me to thy conscious view reveal
All the full sources of the grief I feel.—

Ah know! most sad my anxious nights and days,
Since JENNER first proclaim'd Vaccina's praise;
And told of treasures near Sabrina's stream,
Richer than those which form'd "one Milton's" theme,
Though that descanted on "the glorious sheen
Of Turkis blue, and em'rald's vivid green."
From Fancy's store 'tis true no glittering wealth
Drew he, the modern sage, but spake of health;
Of Io, yielding as she cropp'd the flow'r,
In those blest meads a prophylactic pow'r,
Which, with kind force, diffus'd repellent lymph,
Through the blue veins of each lactarean nymph:—

Here had he ceas'd, I had repress'd my rage,
But, bolder projects all his mind engage ;
And, at his bidding, imitative art
Hence would, to all, a saving boon impart.

An imp I have, once readiest amongst all,
Whom men small-pox, I, pethox-minor * call ;
As younger brothers oft excel on earth,
So, in my court, superior shone his worth ;
None spread more subtilely the latent toil,
And none accumulated equal spoil.
Yes ! from the realms of Afric's burning sands,
From the vast tracts of Asia's outstretch'd lands,

* " Pethox major" is a name given by Dean Swift to the elder brother of the family.

From all the shores, in sea-girt Europe's bound,
From all that hemisphere, Columbus found;
Erst would he joy to cull for me supplies,
And fix his talons in my sacrifice.
Then if some victim, Nature's struggling pow'r,
Snatch'd from his grasp, and gave a lengthen'd hour;
Though baffled, scarcely conquer'd, his essay
Left a sure token on the rescued prey;
The eye, erst glorying in its perfect sight,
Hence knew the gloom of one eternal night;
Hence too the baffled ear would list in vain,
Music's sweet voice, or Friendship's sweeter strain.
And she, the maid of peerless charms, o'er whom
Youth's tints all blended in one roseate bloom,

Save only, that retir'd the mantling glow,
From arms of ivory, and from breast of snow;
She, blest with pow'r, as bowing lovers said,
What will not lovers say to warm my dead?
She, beauty's self, all-wither'd, shock'd the sight,
Struck in her pride, by Pethox' venom'd blight.

But why! Oh conscious friend! to thee relate
Pethox high daring in the work of Fate?
Thou know'st what spoil his efforts erst would bring;
Thou mourn'st the vulture of the crippled wing;
Yet, some slight sketches of his former toil,
Some brief description of his frequent spoil
May well my pencil, and thy thoughts employ;
Then let us drink from memory's cup of joy.—

I pass, to thee unknown, that world remote,
Where light canoes o'er peaceful Ganges float:
I pass his wave where Oronoko rolls,
Nor linger at the Line, nor at the Poles;
But turn, and grin, once more, a ghastly smile,
To former triumphs in Britannia's isle.

Of her full towns, where gloom'd the murky tow'rs,
My active Pethox chiefly shew'd his pow'rs;
There subtil trains invisibly he spread,
And mark'd his course by hecatombs of dead.
As, when some foe a city's gate hath won,
All seek, by flight, th' approaching sack to shun;
Throng through each postern with much-hurrying feet,
And hope for safety only in retreat;

So, when successful Pethox laid his snare,
And threw his spells into the poison'd air,
Warn'd by the tocsin of the constant knell,
As more and more his spreading triumphs swell,
Each, anxious, an asylum sought to gain,
In a lone cottage on some distant plain ;
There scarce receiv'd, the cause of flight untold,
A niggard welcome was procur'd by gold :
And oft, e'en flight was vain ; the tainted blood
Soon pour'd, in rural shades, its feverish flood ;
Quick-gathering pustules stood to all reveal'd,
And Pethox' signet, mine the suff'rer seal'd.
How fear'd the rustics then ! how quickly fled !
Save one, who, pious, linger'd with the dead,

Shut the swoll'n lips, the rigid eyelids clos'd,
In decent state the stiffen'd limbs compos'd ;
Paid ev'ry rite, which human relics crave,
And found, himself, for his reward—a grave.

What cautious speed ! what trembling dread were shown,
When, in that grave, each fest'ring corpse was thrown ;
Midst the dark stillness of the midnight hour,
Slow toll'd the knell, and shook the startled tow'r ;
Barr'd was the church, the sexton urg'd his spade,
And delv'd more deep, by a pale lanthorn's aid,
That safe such pestful body might be laid.
The anxious pastor listen'd from afar
The jolts and gratings of the burial car,

And mark'd its progress, by the glimmering light,
Guiding its driver through the stormy night.
At length it came—a few attendant hinds,
With feet all-trembling, and all-troubled minds,
Bore their fear'd burthen from the church-yard's mound,
And instant sank it in the yawning ground.
Then rose the pray'r, in accent fast and low,
Yet every hearer thought it rose too slow.
And now, the solemn benediction said,
Quick was the earth pil'd high above the dead.

Rous'd by the noise, so dreary and so strange,
Loud bay'd the watch-dog from the neighb'ring grange;
And, from the yew-tree, the scar'd screech-owl's song
Appal'd, yet more, the quick-retreating throng.

Such scenes were rare in later days, 'tis true,
And Britons deified their Montague ;
To them she brought, from Hellespontine shore,
Inoculation's art, unknown before ;
A momentary terror seiz'd my soul,
Lest her strong spell might Pethox' arm control.
Yet vain my dread, accumulated prey
He rather won, and more extended sway.
Oh think ! what joy to see the tangled game,
When, to his sport invited, Pethox came ;
What joy ! to see his very dear allies,
The lancet-arm'd apothecary wise ;
Almost as wise, the busy pratt'ling nurse,
And the dear doctor, when things now grew worse :

Whilst, hov'ring near, till all perform'd their part,
I smil'd, and sped, at length, my certain dart.
Nor stopp'd contagion where its course began ;
Like some brave river, through the realm it ran ;
And, gathering strength, diffus'd, on every side,
Its noisome vapour, and o'erwhelming tide.

Some dear disciples of the good old school,
Haply, in certain quarters, yet bear rule ;
What, though their wages are by others paid,
I know them best associates of my trade.
But should they e'er a dubious symptom see,
To make all certain, may they call in thee ;
Then stop thy chariot, if it pass, be kind,
And bid the undertaker ride behind.

Why, midst such pastime, need our vengeful foes,
Jennerean cohorts, rashly interpose?
Why hurl my Pethox from his height sublime,
And call his triumphs folly, madness, crime?
First in those active ranks, the clergy see,
Vain the temptation of a burial fee,
Themselves decrease the profits of their trade,
And bid, with rust, be dull'd the sexton's spade.
Against my favourite, lo! they try their skill,
And this his lancet wields, and that his quill;
Chiefly, midst rural scenes, their pow'r extends,
The lonely cottager's protecting friends.
They seek the humblest door, nor scorn to rule
The village work-house, nor its pauper-school.

There, with all zeal, their admonitions giv'n,
Speak a new blessing of benignant heav'n—
Some, clos'd the rites of the baptismal hour,
Assert Vaccina's salutary pow'r;
Some, on this theme, their sabbath voices raise,
And make e'en sounding boards reflect her praise.
If, on such subjects, they must write and preach,
Judicious MASSEY the true mode could teach;
He shew'd Inoculation sprang from evil,
Job the first patient, under Doctor Devil *;
And prov'd 'twas wrong, 'twas impious, to contend
'Gainst sickness, man's best counsellor and friend:

* "Job's distemper was the confluent small-pox, and he was inoculated by the devil."—*Sermon by Edmund Massey, as quoted by King in his Answer to Dr. Moseley, page* 35.

Sagely he reason'd, and profoundly thought;
Passive, the people, by his wisdom taught,
Bow'd their meek heads, whene'er I went that way,
And offer'd no resistance to my sway.
Ah! why should his successors move my ire,
And 'gainst my agent subtilely conspire?
Was 't not enough, that, to the sick man's bed,
At duty's call, on eager feet they sped,
To urge confession, penitence, and pray'r;
And, when extracted thorns of worldly care,
Balm richer far than Gilead's to prepare?
Was 't not enough, to bid the doubtful eye
Dwell, in still rapture, on the opening sky,
Pointing its views, through charity's pure scope,
To the blest regions of eternal hope;

Till fervent wishes, for the heavenly crown,
Made stingless my poor dart, and mock'd my frown?
—Then next, more fatal still to Pethox' sport,
The College publish'd its absurd report;
How weak, to bid the hateful truth prevail,
And make one source of that Pactolus fail,
Which wont, through Esculapian vales, to flow,
And rich abundance on their sons bestow:
But such its conduct, and no fellow rose,
With daring mind, the project to oppose:
Hadst thou been of them, see! how I commend
Thy zeal; at least I should have had one friend!
Now all the weight of BAILLIE's vig'rous sense,
And practis'd REYNOLDS' old experience,

And Latham's science, Pitcairn's honour'd name,
And classic Heberden's ingenuous fame,
Oppose my darling agent's baffled skill,
And mar Mortality's once-pleasing Bill:
Whilst infants, mark'd my prey, now grow to men,
Making me wait through threescore years and ten.

That vile report, with more than wonted zeal,
Inflames the guardians of the British weal;
For Jenner, "hear," they claim the world's regard,
Speak the rich praise, and heap the full reward.
To urge his claims, lo, unfee'd lawyers rise!
Lo! county members larger grants advise!
Ten thousand voted, and ten thousand more
Seem not enough to pile his fruitful store;

A meed, still ampler, thriftless MORRIS moves,
And SEBRIGHT seconds, WILBERFORCE approves.
Oh WILBERFORCE! at thy detested name,
Rage must for ever agitate my frame;
My gaunt bones shake, cold dews my limbs o'erspread,
My pallid cheek betrays a flush of red;
Trembles the anxious hand, which hurls my dart,
And mingled sighs and groans escape my heart.
Great were those joys the middle passage gave,
The vast Atlantic but a wider grave.
As the throng'd ships pursued their destin'd way,
How have I triumph'd o'er my frequent prey;
By his own untaught hand the victim died,
Or, haply, Famine liberal spoil supplied;

Or zealous Pethox ampler feasts prepar'd,
Whilst sportive sharks my full enjoyment shar'd.
Oft, when no hope remain'd, the ling'ring slave *
Was spurn'd, still breathing, to the fatal wave;
Then momentary Freedom gave her charm,
Lighted his eye, and nerv'd his struggling arm;
Of distant Africa he thought once more,
Of wife, of children, on that happy shore;
'Oh! homeward waft,' he cried, 'ye generous seas!'
But soon a groan came moaning on the breeze;
His sable brethren echoed loud that groan,
Whilst the white savage laugh'd from heart of stone.

* See the case of the ship Zong, from which 132 sickly slaves were thrown alive into the sea.—*Clarkson's History of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade.*

Those scenes, those sounds, my triumph wont to swell,
Now they are past—why, WILBERFORCE can tell.

Forgive my rage, dear MOSELEY! I would be
Gentle, and soft as summer-moons to thee;
Well hast thou tried, my sinking hopes to raise,
And, for thy meed, again accept my praise.
Though RING, whilst science lends her guiding clue,
Thy tortuous way through many a maze pursue;
Though wonder strike on every reasoning sage,
At bold assertions in thy daring page;
Though Colleges and Clergy, Commons, Lords,
Assail thee, in the bitter war of words;
Though all the jokes thou triest, in merrier fit,
Draw tears from pity, but no smiles from wit;

Though rude experience to thy book reply,
From the four quarters of the world, "a lie;"
Sure of my friendship, hold thy gallant course,
And mock that bugbear, cowards call—remorse;
Exert each art, each bold manœuvre prove,
E'en against hope, still persevere in love.
Chiefly assail the mother's anxious ear,
And, for her offspring, wake the ready fear;
Each pimple, caus'd by Vaccination, show;
Insist that those who speak, will shortly low;
Of ox-like foreheads talk with well-feign'd scorn,
And venture something of a budding horn.
Hint, that, no doubt, there will be future proof
Of a child's foot, converted to a hoof;

Nor let the argument posterior fail,
But, like MONBODDO, give to each a tail.
Thy sense so nervous, and thy wit so bright,
Haply may prove, to some, that wrong is right.
Yet what, if now, my spoils, my joys decline?
Fly on, slow years, and all must still be mine;
More numerous victims then shall own my sway,
And somewhat recompense this forc'd delay.
Grant, from my quiver, that its proudest boast,
Through JENNER's subtilty, were ever lost;
Some shafts remain for this right hand to wield,
Mine still the havoc of war's fruitful field;
Thou did'st not hear the groans of Jena's plain,
Nor see Corunna's tide enrich the main;

And e'en thy steady visage had grown pale,
Had'st thou but mark'd my spoil in Wagram's vale.
What thanks I owe, for active kindness shown,
To him, my much-belov'd NAPOLEON!
More wide, and more productive far, his sphere,
Than the tame tyranny of ROBERSPIERRE;
No priest of mine, in any age, bade rise
More frequent, or more ample sacrifice!
Yet not, on every point, alike he charms,
Great though he be, amid the din of arms;
With different views, he steers the civil helm,
And exiles Pethox from his outstretch'd realm;
With wayward purpose, but determined word,
Retrieving thus the havoc of his sword.

Mine too the prey when Ocean's briny flood
Takes, from the broadside, a deep stain of blood.
For me, and conquest, Albion's navy plies,
Fraught with my thunder, o'er the world it flies ;
And, if the foe be met, with certain aim,
Launches my bolts, and vindicates my claim.
How laugh'd my heart in Egypt's covert bay,
When Albion's lion seiz'd his cow'ring prey !
How drank my gladden'd ear his vengeful roar,
On that proud day which grac'd Trafalgar's shore !

Nor war alone delights—the obsequious sea,
With rocks and tempests, toils, in peace, for me ;
On shore too, shut or open Janus' gate,
What hourly victims amplify my state !

Offer'd by ministers, who joy to please
All veterans of my dear ally, Disease:
E'en now, in varied form, but order due,
Pass her best chiefs, before my raptur'd view;
See, "giant Ague from his marshes springs!"
See, darling Plague drops poison from his wings;
See, dotard Palsy bends one torpid side;
See, cumbrous Dropsy, pants in swollen pride;
See, Apoplexy waves his numbing wand;
See, Cancer, with my viper in his hand!
And writhing Gout endeavours to limp there,
And madd'ning Fever shakes his blazing hair;
Hoarse-breathing Asthma bows his head and pines;
Pthisis, tow'rds me, his hectic cheek inclines;

Delirium gnaws his chain in ceaseless rage,
And, lingering last, crawls slow yet certain Age!
I likewise claim, and much it sooths my pride,
The willing sacrifice of Suicide!
The Fire's brisk hour, the Earthquake's moment blithe,
And the rich crop of Casualty's scythe!
These all assist, and shall till that sure time,
When, stopp'd the harmonies of Nature's chime,
The astonish'd earth is from her axis riv'n,
The sun grows dark, the stars fall prone from heav'n,
And all things yielding to GOD's high decree,
Death last "is swallow'd up in victory."

POSTSCRIPT.

HERE had I check'd the current of my song,
But fondness hurries it once more along;
And, fraught with varied themes, again it flows,
To charm thee, MOSELEY! through a Postscript's close.

Print my Epistle! doubtless some Reviews
Must speak most kindly of my courteous Muse,
Must own, harmonious my heroic chime,
And quite legitimate each proper rhyme.

What, though they blam'd poor Cowper's early lays,
How will they joy to deck my brow with bays!
Make then due offerings at each awful shrine,
Give each a copy, the expence be mine—
That rite omitted, were a sin indeed,
But early notice, shall that rite succeed.
Beloe shall send his lad to the old beech*,
The rusty lyre suspended there, to reach;
And, when 'tis brought, symphonious to my lay,
Shall strike it brisk as on some natal day,

* *Note by the Editor.—Old Beech* :—Because Anacreon, Horace, and other classical poets, warbling, in a delicious climate, their amatory or bacchanalian strains, stretched at their ease "sub rosa," occasionally suspended their lyres on some of the o'erhanging branches; our delightful modern bard (it makes one shiver to think of it) hangs up his "thingumbob," in our latitude, upon a beech; and, when occasionally the impetus of song comes o'er him, sends his boy to fetch it: no wonder that, thus exposed, some of the wires may become a little untractable.—*Vide Birth-day Songs---Passion.*

Thrum with lithe hand, upon the tinkling strings,
Till our joint praise the British Critic sings.

Next GIFFARD, meekest of all scribbling souls,
Shall hie enraptur'd, to commissioned BOWLES;
And tell him, Pious JOHN! 'twill be no sin
To laud me in the Anti-Jacobin;
And show, with what discriminating skill,
I've gather'd flowrets on Parnassian hill.
JOHN, it is true, prefers to spatter mud,
Like POPE's fam'd heroes, when in Fleet-ditch flood;
Still he to genius can give praises due,
Witness his own works, in his own Review:

Where, to the learned eye, each extract nice is,
Describ'd as sweet as honey from Dutch prizes;
Though, fye on calumny! such praise may bring,
E'en like such honey, to his mind, a sting.

Soon too as BECKET my rich verse hath seen,
Post-haste he'll send it down to Turnham-Green,
And beg that GRIFFITHS, fascinating rogue,
Will puff me in his Monthly-Catalogue;
Or, in an earlier page, extol my song,
And give short comments, upon extracts long.
Thus, when a verse hath CATALANI trill'd,
An interval by symphony is fill'd;

The lyre accordant, the obedient flute,
All their soft purpose, to her warblings, suit ;
No alien note, no discord harsh intrudes,
Till, with obsequious strain, the whole concludes.

Ah ! let me, let me on your praises dwell !
Critics ! whose worth no common tongue can tell ;
Who love, like me, to damp a rising flame,
And blight the opening blossoms of a name ;
To bid Exertion from its purpose swerve,
And paralise young Effort's swelling nerve.

Were all like you, for ever might they strive,
But all are not—I fear that northern hive :

Though not, without a sting, those honey bees
Love to sip dew from DAPHNE's balmy trees;
To gather sweets near Castalie's pure wells,
And richly store them in Hymettian cells.

Nor these alone—of others I could tell,
Who joy the sail ambition spreads to swell;
Pleas'd, if the just, though liberal aid they give,
Teach some small bark, midst threat'ning seas, to live,
To speed right onward, though the foe defy,
And force the honours Envy would deny.
Some heirs of glory mock my utmost pow'r;
What, though my with'ring grasp destroy the flow'r,

A precious odour sanctifies its name,
Embalms its memory, and defeats my claim.
All such I hate—the hour, 'tis true, will come,
When JENNER's self, shall moulder in the tomb.
His frame, once prompt to succour and to save,
Must lie, no longer useful—in the grave!
But, baffled all my pow'r, my triumph vain,
His praise must live, his glory must remain;
Must spread through every age, and every clime,
Wide as the world, defying me and time.

Yet, dearest MOSELEY! though thou seek'st to shine,
I fear not thee—no—thou art wholly mine!

Spite of mad-dogs, in much-prais'd sugar's spite,
Thy twinkling star must set in endless night.
Fame may, indeed, when now its orbit 's run,
Say, that it tried to put out JENNER's sun:
Long, I confess, in memory's page have stood
Some names, left-handedly allied to good;
Thus thanks to VIRGIL, BAVIUS, MŒVIUS owe,
Indebted VERRES thus to CICERO;
Such, too, the honour which may chance to crown
Thee, as the heir of JENNER's rich renown!

But hark, that roar!—its summons I obey,
My "pale horse" calls me, with upbraiding neigh;

A gallant steed he is—fierce flame his eyes,
His breath the gale of pestilence supplies ;
With blood distils each ringlet of his mane,
And his hoof joys to trample on the slain ;
On him delighted, o'er the world I go,
Nor need Sumatra's sun, nor Tornea's snow.

What, once again that neigh ?—farewell, dear friend !
Fate, bring my quiver, and my way attend !—
Love still would linger, and its offering swell,
But victims wait me ; so farewell—farewell.

Finis.

Brettell & Co. Printers,
Marshall-Street, Golden-Square, London.